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Summary Record of NSC Executive Committee Meeting No. 12
October 29, 1962, 6:30 PM

Secretary Rusk reported on developments during the day in New York. The Soviet position on inspection, as stated by Kuznetsov, is that the Russians are willing to have the International Red Cross officials inspect all cargoes going to Cuba to ensure that no arms at all are taken to Cuba. The Red Cross officials could inspect cargoes at sea from non-U.S. ships or from the wharves in Cuban ports. The Russians would not permit on-site inspection until all Soviet missiles are removed. Kuznetsov hinted that the missile removal operation would take about a week. (See attached cable.)

Secretary Rusk said that if there was to be no inspection on the ground, air reconnaissance became crucial. He indicated that the Russians might not object to our overflights. He said that U Thant had asked Stevenson how long we wanted the inspection to go on. Permanent inspection would be difficult, but inspection limited to a period of weeks would be easier. He said the Russians were prepared to accept UN inspectors in Cuba.

The President said he approved of the plan to have Red Cross officials inspect all ships from Bloc ports. He also agreed to suspend the quarantine for two days during the visit of the Acting Secretary General to Havana.

Secretary McNamara reported that a Soviet ship, listing its cargo as wheat, but carrying unidentified crates, was about 300 miles off Cuba. Admiral Anderson wanted to stop this ship, but it had been decided not to stop it.

General Taylor commented that what we are asking the Russians to do is to dismantle their missiles immediately. Mr. Bundy added that our request did not include dismantling the SAM sites.

The President returned to the question of air reconnaissance. He agreed that surveillance should be done in the least provocative way, but we must continue to maintain surveillance until a satisfactory UN system is in place. He said he thought we should tell Mr. McCloy in New York of our plans, but no public announcement should be made. He agreed that no reconnaissance flights would be flown tomorrow or Wednesday. He asked that a study be prepared for him as to what we consider a satisfactory inspection system.

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Secretary McNamara said that if we were to have no on-site inspection in Cuba, we must have high- and low-level reconnaissance.

The President asked whether it would be possible for us to obtain pictures of the outgoing Soviet ships. He asked Secretary Rusk to make clear to our officials in New York that we must continue aerial reconnaissance unless the UN takes over this task.

Secretary Rusk commented that the political situation, as it had developed during the day, appeared to support the belief that Khrushchev's deal is still on, but if pictures from today's reconnaissance mission reveal that the nose cones are on the missiles in Cuba, then we will face a most difficult decision.

Bromley Smith